

## SB 918

### Testimony of Zeb Olko

Dear Committee Members

My Name is Zeb Olko from Enfield. I am in favor of SB 918 that supports DDS services to individuals that qualify. I did not receive school based transition services (18-21) from my school district. I left the state to pursue my dream to go to college. My school team refused to acknowledge or provide me any supports to go to the community college. I was told that I could not attend college because I had a disability. I was offered the school's transition program only that did not include any of my interests. The program consisted of my working in a restaurant, grocery store and nursing home. These are jobs that I did not want and had no interest to learn. I was accepted to George Mason University in Fairfax, Va and left the state to pursue my dream. There is no college or university program in CT for students with intellectual disabilities. I majored in communication at George Mason University. DDS did provide grant funding for additional RA supports that I required to attend university classes. I had the opportunity to intern on Capitol Hill for Senator Blumenthal, Congressman Greg Harper MS and Congressman Steve Stockman Tx. I was the keynote speaker for the Northern Virginia Buddy Walk in 2013. I lived in an off campus townhouse and in a campus dorm. I did my own shopping, cooking and laundry. I learned how to navigate the campus, take a bus and the Metro to DC. I flew back and forth to school and sometimes Congressman Courtney was on the same flight. I was privileged to have had these experiences, none that I would have had in CT. Today I am home with no DDS supports and unable to find employment. No person qualified for DDS services should have to sit and wait. I do not have a high level of need (LON) and will most likely have no support from DDS. I urge you to vote in favor of SB 918 and restore and increase the funding for DDS so that all qualified persons will receive services in the 2016-17 budget. I would like to be regarded as a valued citizen and a contributing member of my community. We all matter.